

Dear Ms. Harrison;

Yesterday our boat shadowed the Hilcorp vessel Polarcus Alima as they began their seismic survey in Lower Cook Inlet. Most of the day was spent near Augustine volcano and outside of Chinitna Bay. We stayed 2.5 miles from operations as was requested by the skipper of the ship. During an 8 hour period we saw 3 humpback whales in the EZ zone during exploration.... We photographed three violations of their NMFS permit when Polarcus Alima failed to cease operations in the presence of marine mammals. Specifically we saw one humpback 11:00-11:10 (N59 37.324 W152 14.864) and two sea otters (10:50 am N151 34.327 W151 12.762) within their EZ radius. Their trained observers either did not detect the presence of these marine mammals or the company failed to stop operations when they were detected.

We dropped a hydrophone at different intervals and could hear a few cetacean vocalizations throughout the day. We tested the distance at which the seismic explosions could be heard. At 16 miles from the vessel we began to see marine mammals and cetaceans. The boom of the guns was loud and clear the entire trip back to Homer, even at the end of the Homer Spit.

We wrapped up our day in the dark and were astounded to still hear Hilcorp seismic explosions when no visual monitors could possibly detect the presence of marine mammals. Why ask scientists to comment on night operations if NOAA has already given authorization to Hilcorp to conduct unmonitored activity? Or is your agency unaware that night operations are underway?

We have worked in Kachemak bay, Lower Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound since 1980 under NOAA protected species permits (presently number 21295 under the supervision of Amy Hapeman).

This was Hilcorp's second day using the Polarcus Alima for seismic testing and they violated their permit at least five times. We respectfully request that this permit be revoked because it is obvious Hilcorp has no intention of safeguarding marine mammals in their quest for oil and gas. We further insist that all night operations cease immediately to prevent harm to marine mammals undetected by observers.

All of these data is available to NOAA.

Sincerely,

Olga von Ziegesar and Shelley Gill

Winged Whale Research